

HAMLET



Presented by Laurence Olivier

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FOR SIMON OLIVIER

This book is not only a unique record of one of the greatest films of modern times, but it has also been specially designed so that the scenery and characters can, if desired, be mounted and displayed upon the stage of a Model Theatre. Each scene may be represented by a tableau of characters, according to the directions given in the text. The size of the scenery has

been adjusted to fit into Benjamin Pollock's Miniature Theatres, and so to enable adults and children to re-enact this famous story in their own homes.

Many film-goers, and lovers of Shakespeare, however, will find this book a delightful record of the film, and an introduction to the complete play, even if it is never actually performed upon the stage of a model theatre.

HAMLET

A PLAY BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WRITTEN ABOUT 1600

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY LAURENCE OLIVIER

A TWO CITIES FILM, 1948.

CAST

Hamlet	...	...	...	LAURENCE OLIVIER
The King	...	...	...	BASIL SYDNEY
The Queen	...	...	...	EILEEN HERLIE
Ophelia	...	...	...	JEAN SIMMONS
Polonius	...	...	...	FELIX AYLMER
Laertes	...	...	...	TERENCE MORGAN
Horatio	...	...	...	NORMAN WOOLAND
Osric	...	...	...	PETER CUSHING
Sentry	...	...	...	ESMOND KNIGHT
Gravedigger	...	...	...	STANLEY HOLLOWAY

Costumes and Sets by ROGER FURSE.

HAMLET

A SYNOPSIS OF THE PLOT ARRANGED IN 14 SCENES

If the play is presented upon a Model Theatre it is suggested that the following story should be read aloud, the curtain being raised to reveal the various tableaux.

The action of the play takes place in the Castle of Elsinore, in Denmark.

The curtain rises. The Battlements (No. 1).

The Sentry and Horatio on the stage.

The Sentry is keeping his watch upon the battlements. It is night time, and he is nervous, for in the past two nights he has seen the ghost of the recently dead King Hamlet walking upon the castle ramparts. Horatio, his captain, joins him, and while he is describing to him what he has seen, the Ghost suddenly appears again.

Enter Ghost.

Horatio speaks to it but, as it is about to answer, a cock crows, and the Ghost vanishes.

Exit Ghost.

They decide to tell all this to young Hamlet, the son of the late King.

Lower curtain.

The next morning, in the Great Hall of the Castle, the King and Queen of Denmark are in council, with their court.

Raise curtain.

Scene No. 2. King and Queen, fig. 2, Hamlet, fig. 1, Laertes, fig. 1, and Polonius on stage.

The King is the brother of the late King Hamlet, whose widow he has married less than two months after her husband's death. The chief minister, Polonius, introduces his son, Laertes, who wishes to return to France to complete his studies.

Hamlet sits apart, brooding on his mother's hasty marriage with his uncle, so soon after the death of his father. He returns vague and rude replies to the questions put to him.

Lower curtain.

When the council has broken up, and while Laertes has gone to say good-bye to his sister, Ophelia, Horatio and the Sentry approach Hamlet and tell him how they have seen the ghost of his father. Hamlet decides to watch for it to-night on the ramparts.

Raise curtain. The Battlements (No. 1). Hamlet, fig. 2, Horatio, Sentry and Ghost on stage.

When darkness has fallen, Hamlet, Horatio and the Sentry take up their positions on the watch platform. The Ghost appears again, and beckons Hamlet to follow it; his friends try to dissuade him, but he shakes them off and follows the Ghost across the ramparts.

Lower curtain.

The Ghost leads Hamlet to the summit of the castle, and there tells him his story:

Raise curtain. Scene No. 3. Hamlet, fig. 2 and Ghost on.

"I am thy Father's spirit;

Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away.
List, list, o, list !
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.”

To Hamlet's astonishment and anguish, the Ghost of his father describes how he has been murdered by his brother, Hamlet's uncle, who poured poison into his ear as he lay asleep. The murderer then succeeded to his throne and married his widow.

As dawn begins to break, the Ghost vanishes (*Exit Ghost*), and Hamlet swears to revenge his father's murder. When he is joined by Horatio and the Sentry he makes them promise to keep silent about the strange doings of the night, and warns them that in the future his behaviour may appear almost mad. He leaves them, wondering how to achieve his purpose :

“ The time is out of joint ; —O cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right ! ”

Lower curtain.

A few days later Polonius comes to the King and Queen in much agitation because Hamlet has been behaving strangely to Ophelia, his daughter. Unobserved, Hamlet overhears their conversation. The King and Queen plan to hide behind the curtains to see what will happen when he meets Ophelia again.

*Raise curtain. A Room in the Castle (No. 4). Ophelia, fig. 1,
Hamlet, fig. 3 on, King, fig. 1,*

Queen, fig. 1 and Polonius partly hidden behind pillars.

Ophelia is told to wait for Hamlet, and the King and Queen, with Polonius, hide behind the arras. Hamlet comes in and speaks with her, but thinking she is part of the plot to spy on him he is violently rude to her, telling her to “ get thee to a nunnery.” He leaves her at last in a violent passion.

Lower curtain.

The King and Queen, who have heard everything, decide that Hamlet must be mad.

Meanwhile Hamlet gazes down at the rocks far below, from the summit of the castle and—in despair at the miserable state of his life—wonders whether it is worth while to go on living.

Raise curtain. Scene No. 3, Hamlet, fig. 3 on.

“ To be, or not to be ; that is the question.

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them ?

To die

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time
And grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of ? ”

Lower curtain.

He decides that he cannot escape his duty by commit-

ting suicide, and makes his way back to the castle.

A company of travelling players arrives at the castle, and Polonius ushers them in, hoping that they may divert Hamlet from his melancholy.

Raise curtain. A Room in the Castle (No. 4). Hamlet, fig. 1, and Polonius on.

Hamlet is delighted to see them, and suddenly he has an idea to use them as a part of his plan. He will get them to perform a play in front of the King and Queen and the whole court, in which the murder of his father, as described by the Ghost, will be re-enacted. If the King looks upset and guilty, he will know that the Ghost spoke the truth.

"The play's the thing

Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."

Lower curtain.

The audience is assembled in the great hall to see the play.

Raise curtain. Scene No. 2. King and Queen, fig. 2, Hamlet, fig. 4, Player King and Player Murderer on.

Hamlet watches the King carefully. The actors show a player king going to sleep in his garden, and a murderer pouring poison into his ear. The King looks uneasy. Then the murderer makes love to the wife of the player king, and they are married.

The King rises to his feet in dismay and rushes out of the hall; and the performance breaks up in confusion.

Lower curtain.

Hamlet is jubilant with the success of his trick, and

now fully believes everything that the Ghost has told him.

Polonius comes to say that the Queen is very offended by the entertainment, and that she wishes Hamlet to come to her room. He then returns to the Queen's closet, and hides behind the curtain in order to hear what goes on.

Raise curtain. Scene No. 5. Queen, fig. 1 and Hamlet, fig. 4 on.

Hamlet speaks roughly to his mother when she questions him, and, in fear, she cries out in alarm. Behind the curtain Polonius calls out for help, and Hamlet—thinking it is the King—stabs him through the arras and kills him.

Hamlet then upbraids his mother for marrying a murderer after her first noble husband, and compares the two men :

"Look here, upon this picture, and on this ;

The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.

See what a grace was seated on this brow ;

An eye like Mars, to threaten and command ;

A stature like the herald Mercury

New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill.

This was your husband, look you now what follows ;

This is your husband, like a mildewed ear,

Blasting his wholesome brother ;

A murderer and a villain ;

A cut-purse of the empire and the throne,

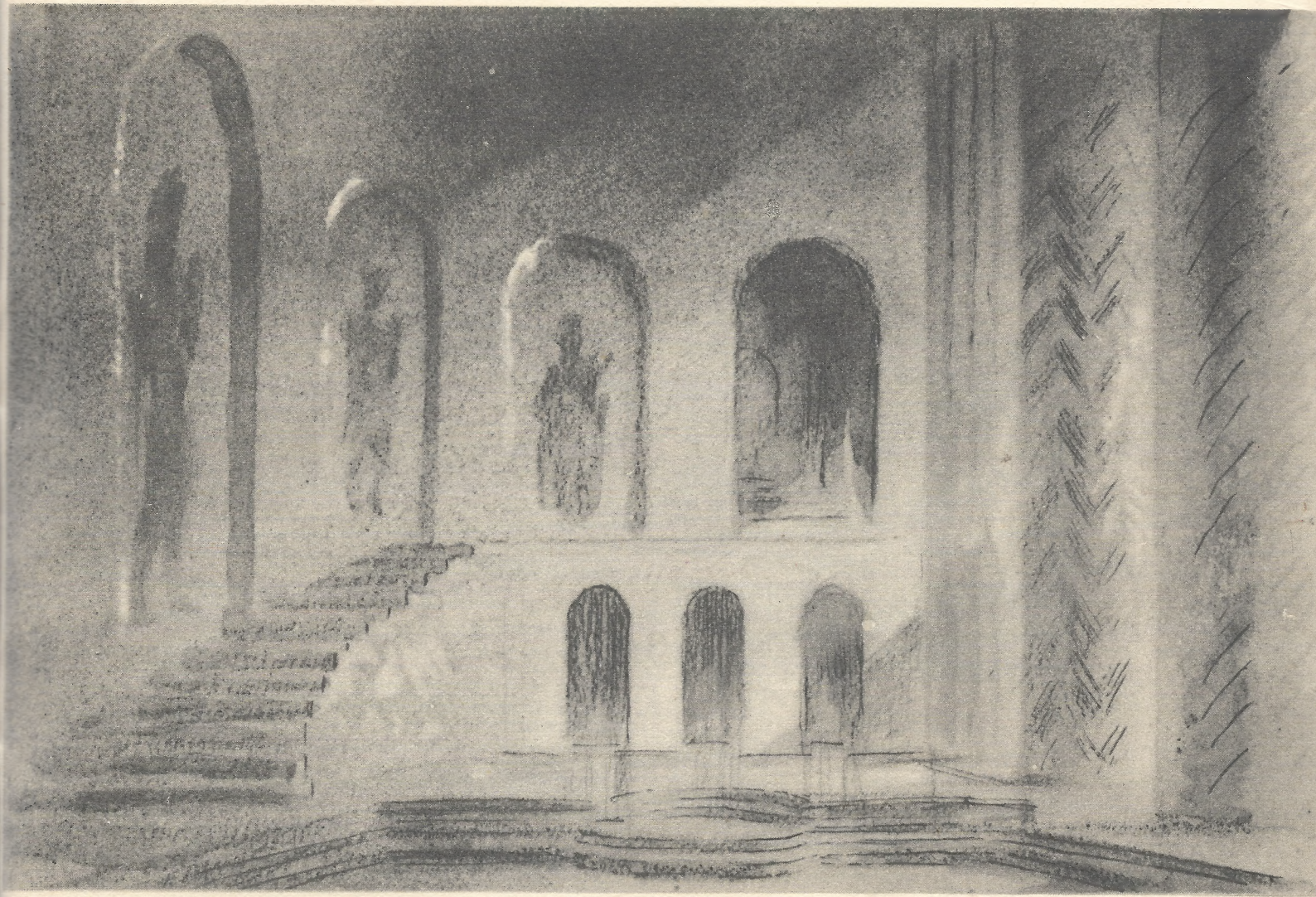
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,

And put it in his pocket ;

A king of shreds and patches ! "



SCENE I. THE BATTLEMENTS.



SCENE II. THE GREAT HALL.



POLONIUS



LAERTES FIG. 1



HAMLET FIG. 5



HAMLET FIG. 6



HAMLET FIG. 4



HAMLET FIG. 3



THE QUEEN FIG. 1



OSRIC



THE KING FIG. 1



HAMLET FIG. 2



SENTRY



PLAYER MURDERER



GRAVEDIGGER



OPHELIA FIG. 2



OPHELIA FIG. 1



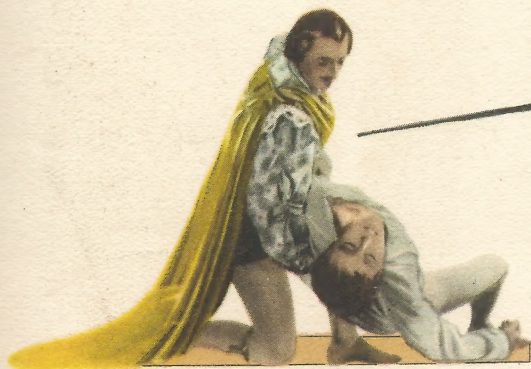
HAMLET FIG. 1



HORATIO



PLAYER KING



LAERTES FIG. 3



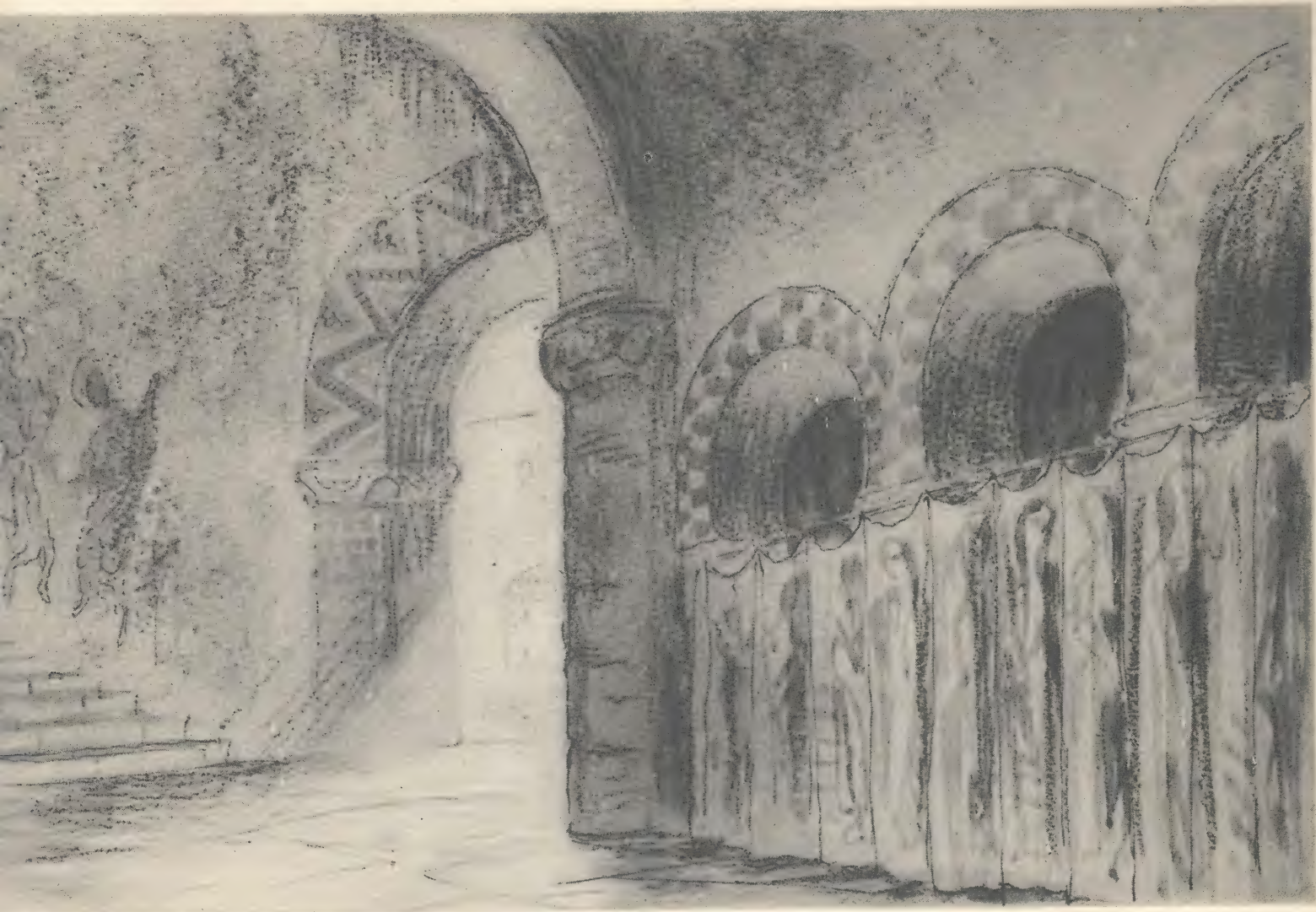
LAERTES FIG. 2



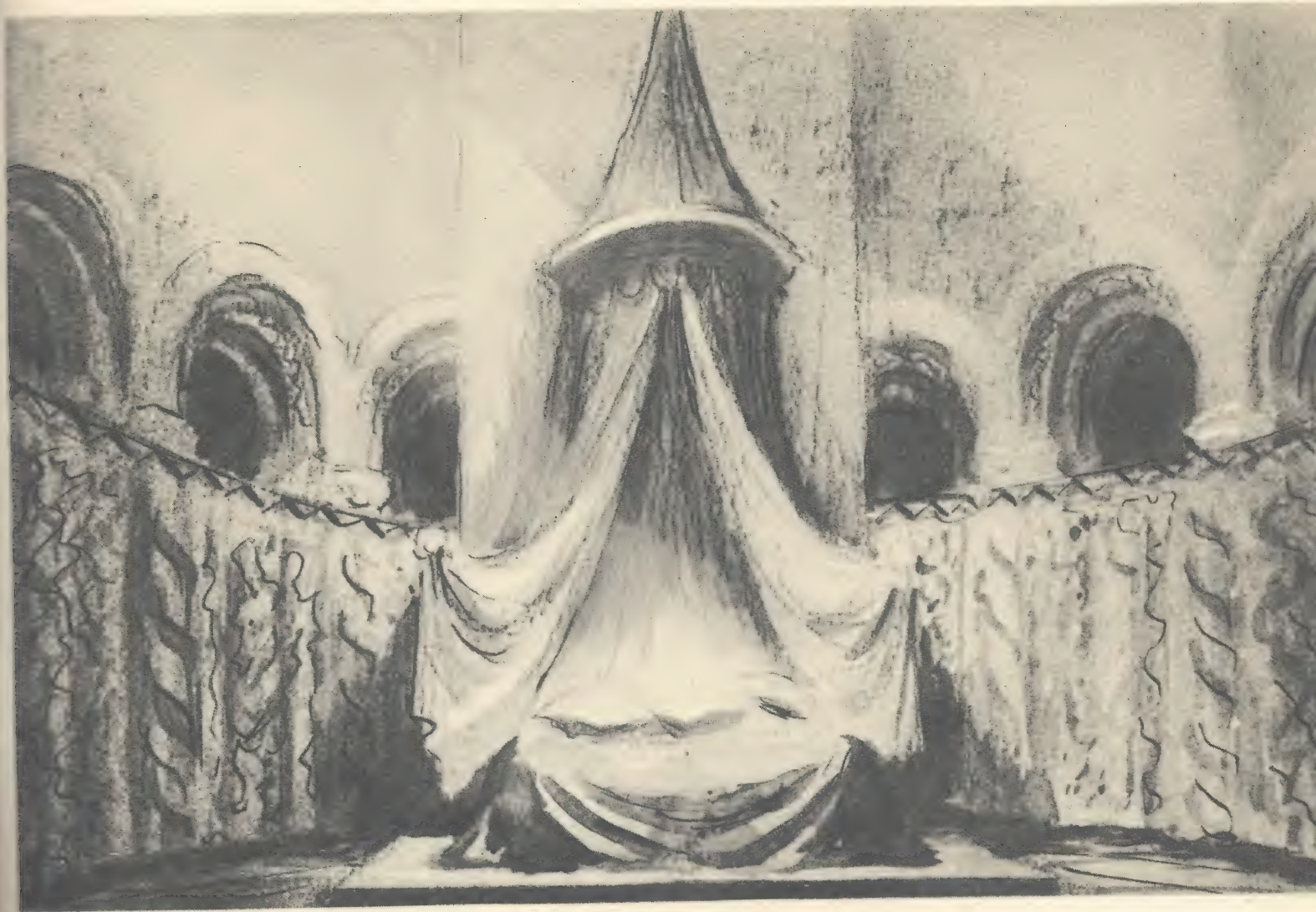
THE KING & QUEEN FIG. 2



SCENE III. THE SUMMIT OF THE CASTLE.



SCENE IV. A ROOM IN THE CASTLE.



SCENE V. THE QUEEN'S BEDROOM.



SCENE VI. THE GRAVEYARD.

The Queen cries out to Hamlet to stop, and at that moment (*Enter Ghost*) the Ghost of his father appears again, though the Queen cannot see or hear it. It tells Hamlet to continue his vengeance, but to deal gently with his mother.

Lower curtain.

Hamlet leaves his mother, making her promise not to let the King make love to her again.

Raise curtain. A Room in the Castle (No. 4).

King, fig. 1 and Hamlet, fig. 4 on.

The King, afraid that Hamlet has discovered his guilty secret, determines to get rid of him, and the death of Polonius gives him a good excuse to banish him from the court. Hamlet is sent to England, with a sealed letter which is supposed to be one of introduction, but which actually asks the English king to put the bearer to death immediately.

Lower curtain.

While Hamlet is away, Laertes, 'Polonius' son, comes home from France for his father's funeral.

Raise curtain. Scene No. 4. Ophelia, fig. 2, Laertes, fig. 1,

King, fig. 1 and Queen, fig. 1 on.

He is distraught to find that his sister, Ophelia, has gone off her head. She was in love with Hamlet, and his strange behaviour and the murder of her father, have driven her quite mad. She wanders round the castle with wild flowers in her hair chanting little songs.

Lower curtain.

Finally, while picking flowers alone at the river's edge, she falls in and is drowned.

Raise curtain. A Graveyard (No. 6). Gravedigger on.

The Gravedigger is digging Ophelia's grave in the churchyard; as he works he turns up the skull of Yorick, once a famous jester at the court,—“Alas, poor Yorick!” Meanwhile Hamlet returns unexpectedly. He has never reached England; when on board the ship he managed to read the letter he was taking, and so when a pirate vessel grappled with his own he took the chance to jump on board it, and thus returned to Denmark.

Lower curtain.

The funeral procession carrying Ophelia's corpse now comes to the graveside, and the coffin is lowered in. Laertes calls down curses upon Hamlet, who—he considered—was the cause of both his father's and his sister's deaths, and laments bitterly the passing of his dearly loved sister.

Hamlet comes forward, and reveals himself as one who also loved Ophelia, “Forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum.” Laertes grapples with him, and they fight over the grave, till they are parted.

Raise curtain. A room in the Castle (No. 4).

King, fig. 1, Laertes, fig. 1 and Osric on.

The King eggs on Laertes' anger against Hamlet, and takes advantage of it to make another plan for killing him. He arranges a duel between Laertes and Hamlet, and contrives that the rapier to be used by Laertes will be dipped in poison. To make doubly sure, he arranges for a cup of poisoned wine to be ready for Hamlet to drink from. Osric, a courtier, is sent to carry the

challenge to Hamlet.

Lower curtain.

All the court gathers to see the duel between Hamlet and Laertes.

Raise curtain. Scene No. 2. Hamlet, fig. 5 and Laertes, fig. 2 ;

King and Queen, fig. 2, Osric and Horatio on.

At first Hamlet has the better of it, but at last Laertes succeeds in wounding him with the poisoned sword. Hamlet still fights on, and in the confusion he exchanges swords with Laertes whom he now wounds again.

Lower curtain.

During the fight the Queen picks up the cup of poisoned wine intended for Hamlet, drinks it, and falls down dead.

Laertes, dying from the wound given by his own poisoned sword, confesses all to Hamlet, and puts the blame on the King.

Hamlet, then, leaps upon the King, and kills him with the poisoned sword.

Raise curtain. Scene No. 2. Laertes, fig. 3,

Hamlet, fig. 6, and Horatio on.

Then, at last, Hamlet, dying from the wound he has received, is carried to the royal throne and there speaks his last words.

“ You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act . . .
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.
The rest is silence.”

He dies. Horatio, Hamlet's faithful friend, gives orders for his corpse to be carried away in honour.

“ Let four captains
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage ;
And for his passage
The soldiers' music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him—
Go bid the soldiers shoot.
Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”

Lower curtain.

THE END

METHOD 2. IN CARDBOARD

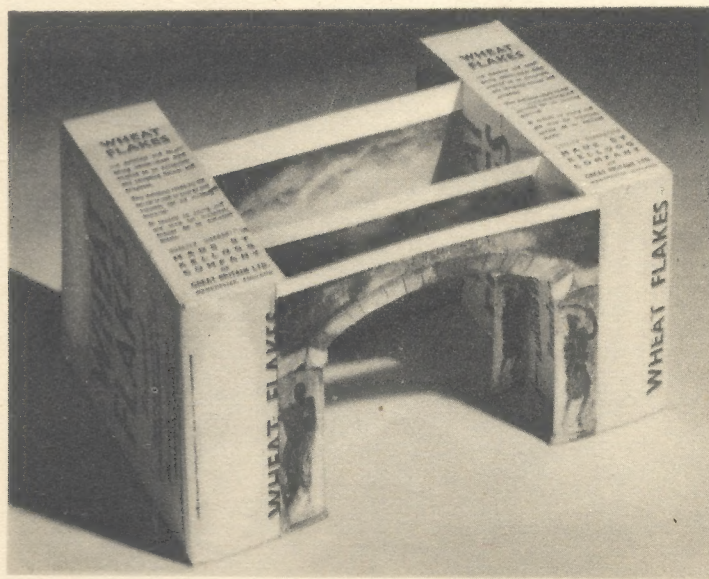
A more flimsy, but quite effective model stage can be made from two cardboard breakfast cereal packets. The exact measurements will depend on the type of cereal packet you are using, but the illustration shows the general method.

Down one side of each packet make a series of thin slits, two inches apart. Stand the two packets on the table, $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. apart, with the slit sides inward. Stick the first Hamlet arch to the edges of the two bases, to form the proscenium of the theatre ; place the second

arch so that it is supported by the slits behind the proscenium ; and place the scene you wish to show in the slits behind this.

This theatre can be made in ten minutes, and all the tools you require are a pair of scissors and a tube of seccotine. Of course you will paint the outside, or stick coloured paper over it, to cover up the printing on the packets.

Another type of cardboard stage, into which the Hamlet scenery will fit very effectively, is described in "A Theatre You Can Make," published by Penguin Books Ltd., as a Giant Puffin.



Scenes from the film



DESIGNED AND PRODUCED BY DENES STUDIOS LIMITED.

PUBLISHED BY BENJAMIN POLLOCK LIMITED

1 JOHN ADAM STREET LONDON W.C.2.

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